Friends Bulletin

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OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

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Apache Mountain Spirit: Ceramic Sculpture, 1983, 27.25" – by Robert Shashinda, Mescalero Apache

Generating Balance

Mescalero Apache Centeredness

by Claire R. Farrer, Urbana Meeting (IL) and Sante Fe Meeting (NM)

Preface

In 1974 my daughter, Suzanne, and I moved to the Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation in southcentral New Mexico where I was to do dissertation fieldwork for a Ph.D. in anthropology and folklore. We, my former husband and I, had lived in Alamogordo, a town about 35 miles from the reservation, from 1961 through 1971 and our daughter had been born there in 1962.

My first contact with the Mescalero came through my former husband who employed a reservation man in his lab. The man invited us to the reservation for a summer ceremonial where I met his wife. That contact began what was to become the focus of my anthropological work. I still return to the reservation each year and maintain contacts with fictive family, as well as friends, between visits.

What follows is a compilation of the ways in which I was taught about the Mescalero Apache concepts of the center. At the request of the individuals involved, all names below are fictionalized with the exception of those in my immediate "family" (surnamed Second and Evans), those who, in 1975, adopted my daughter and me. *(Continued on page 123)*

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Centering the Universe: A Way of Balance and Harmony

What does the 13th Century German scholar and Christian mystic, Meister Johannes Eckhart, and 20th Century Bernard Second, Mescalero Apache Singer of Ceremonies and keeper of spiritual traditions, have in common? A symbol – the circle – and centeredness.

"I have often said that a person who wishes to begin a good life should be like a man who draws a circle. Let him get the center in the right place and keep it so and the circumference will be good. In other words, let a man first learn to fix his heart on God and then his good deeds will have virtue; but if a man's heart is unsteady, even the great things he does will be of small advantage."

Meister Eckhart from *The Choice is Always Ours*, ed. by Dorothy B. Phillips, Elizabeth B. Howes and Lucille M. Nixon, Harper and Row, New York, p. 83.

"The circle of life is formed by a quartered circle. The visual metaphor it presents is a rich one for Mescalero people. It is simultaneously the Universe and its forces, the world and its four primary directions ... the balance and harmony inherent in the Universe and that which Nde (the People) are pledged to maintain .... The center point is the metaphysical place where the Mescalero Apaches are, no matter where they may be located physically .... As long as they maintain their own centeredness, they generate the energy required to center the Universe."

— from the teachings of Bernard Second as related to Claire Farrer in this issue: "Generating Balance, Mescalero Apache Centeredness."

How do we as Friends center ourselves? How do we practice paying attention? Have we

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1964: The Family and the Center

Annie Brownfeather had told me to meet her after lunch the next day when we parted the night before, as my little family left the ceremonial grounds to comply with the Anglo curfew. She didn't tell me where to meet her or what I was supposed to be doing. Yet my curiosity had been piqued sufficiently as we watched the spectacular Mountain God dancers – with their tall headdresses and bodies completely covered with paint, masks, kilts, and moccasins – that I showed up in mid-afternoon, Suzanne on my hip, looking for Annie. One of the women cooking in the long oak-boughed cooking arbor directed me to a camp just to the south and east of the ceremonial mesa.

Camps, erected for the summer girls' puberty ceremonial, consist of tipis, tents, and arbors oriented toward the ceremonial mesa. Although the mesa is over 6,000 feet, still it gets hot during the day and everyone appreciates the coolness of the arbor, with the ever-present winds from the desert below blowing through the freshly applied oak boughs. Those same boughs keep one from seeing inside the arbors so they become quiet and cool family refuges.

As I entered camp, there seemed to be no one present, save a group of toddlers sitting in the dirt passing around a much gummed and chewed piece of fried bread. A man emerged from a large tent. "I'm looking for Annie. She said to meet her here," I said to him rather tentatively. "Come in. I'm her uncle. She said you were coming."

I walked toward the tent, Suzanne still on my hip but looking longingly at the other children. The uncle barred my way with arms folded and looked directly at Suzanne. In what I was later to learn was 'inch'indi', communication without words, he indicated I might go into the tent but Suzanne would have to stay outside. The only place to leave her was in the dirt with the other children, roughly in the center of the family camp area. As soon as I placed her in the dirt, with much foreboding I admit, a woman came out of a tipi to say, "I'm Annie's sister; I'm watching them. She will be all right." (As indeed she was; when I emerged from the tent several hours later, I was met by another woman who came out of the tipi with my sleeping daughter in her arms; Suzanne had been washed and dressed in warm clothes, for cold comes with the setting of the sun in desert country.)

Entering the tent behind Uncle, I watched the painting of the Mountain God dancers, a ritual that women are usually forbidden to see. At the time, I did not appreciate the significance of my being there nor the honor bestowed in my being allowed to watch the body painting. But I did learn that almost everyone in the camp was related to each other and that the area where the children sat with the fry bread was the joint responsibility of all who camped there. It was the center of the family, occupied by those upon whom the family centered: the children.

1974: Living at the Center

Parking the U-Haul truck in the Indian Health Service Hospital lot, I took Suzanne and the dog to find someone who could tell us which house was to be ours for the next year. At the Community Center (where there are Tribal offices as well as a swimming pool, gymnasium, cafeteria, and library), I learned that a disliked Public Health Service physician was being evicted and that we were to have his house. The only trouble was that he was fighting the eviction and the Tribe had not yet solidified the contract with the Public Health Service so that they, the Tribe, would pay the Service for the house Suzanne and I were to occupy. From graduate school to the center of controversy: I wasn't sure I was prepared for that. So I announced I would be in Alamogordo at a friend's house. Leaving the telephone number to be called when things settled down, we went back to the U-Haul to get a couple of things and check the lock before heading down the mountains and into Alamogordo.

A woman's voice startled me, as I closed the doors to the U-Haul; I'd not heard her

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approach and, anyway, my mind was on eviction notices and controversy and starting off on the wrong foot and on my plants dying in the back of the truck before I'd be able to unpack them. The woman said, "I remember you. You put her (with a lip gesture toward Suzanne) with our babies; you trust us. You respect us. We will take care of you. No one will bother your things. You will live in the center of us."

And so we did. We lived in the first (east-most) Public Service House, erected for the physicians and nurses; ours was the one intended for the head of the hospital and, as such, was the only single family house among duplexes. We were visible from the roads and in a line with the home of the President of the Tribal Council, but ours was below his home. Symbolic statements were being made by our living place: we were in the administrative center of the reservation, centered below but within eyesight of the leader of the Tribe, yet also centered in an Anglo enclave. The choice was to be ours, whether we would maintain our center with the Anglos or with The People. We chose the latter.

1975: Dreaming from the Center

I'd been trying to find Bernard Second for almost four months; everyone said I should work with him to learn the language and the other things I needed to know. Bernard was a young man who was reputed, as a Singer of Ceremonies, to be a Tribal resource, the one to whom people turned to learn the old ways, hear the old stories, learn the old way of saying or doing things. Everyone said he was central, not only to the running of ceremonies but also to my work. But finding him was difficult, especially, as it turned out, because he did not wish to be found by me.

One day, when my planned activities at the elementary school had been postponed, I walked into the Tribal Museum, where Bernard's wife was director and curator. She and I chatted for a few minutes, for we'd become friends during the months I was trying to find him. She startled me by saying, "He's waiting for you in there," with a lip gesture indicating her office.

"You're late," he chided me when I walked into the office. "How can I be late when I didn't know I was coming here?" I queried. His only response was, "You are here because I called you." I, thinking only of telephones, denied having been called. He shrugged and repeated that I was there because he had called me.

Bernard, whose own family later adopted us, said he had dreamed me before I arrived on the reservation but that his dream had been only that someone was coming with whom he should work to record some of the things he knew about his people, their history and their language. He had been disappointed to find I was a woman for he had assumed his dream referred to a man; his knowledge was men's knowledge, not to be shared with women. (The Apache are a matrilineal people with almost everything, save religious and ritual knowledge, belonging to women; the men jealously guard the religion, its associated ritual, and the ritual language in which religious activities must be conducted.) He had decided not to be found until he was sure I was the one he had dreamed, for that person was to become a central point for him for some time to come. While he made no pretense of knowing why Power would choose a woman for what he believed to be a man's job, he nonetheless was finally convinced that he should work with me. And so he did – and does.

1978: Circles and Centers

Ndái' bijuuł, the circle of life, is formed by a quartered circle.

The visual metaphor it presents is a rich one for Mescalero people. It is simultaneously the Universe and its forces, the world and its four primary directions, the proper way to speak and construct speeches, the balance and harmony inherent in the Universe and that which Nde (The People) are pledged to maintain, the four stages of life (infancy, childhood, adulthood, old age), the four seasons enclosed by a year – measuring from one summer solstice to the next; the visual metaphor is all this and more.

"Hmmmm. It looks like a floor plan for the girls' ceremonial tipi," I mused. "It's the same thing! Pay attention!" Bernard responded.

The center crossing point, what is called a chiasm from the Greek chi symbol (χ), represents the balance point of the universe, the firepit in the girls' tipi and the girls' puberty ceremonial in the life of The People, as well as life in general within the created universe. The center point is the metaphysical place where the Mescalero Apaches are no matter where they may be located physically. For they believe that their actions, both individual and as a group, are essential to the continued maintenance of the inherent harmony of the universe, as conceived and given genesis by Bik'gudindé (According to Whom There is Life), the Creator. As long as they maintain their own centeredness, they generate the energy required to center the universe.

Maintaining the center is a job that requires all people, Anglo or Indian or any other ethnicity, to be mindful of their assigned place and responsibility. The Mescalero Apache believe that our human minds are too puny to comprehend the Creator. Thus Creator, neither male nor female but both and neither, gave to each people in the world a set of responsibilities. Hopi must be true to the Hopi vision; Christians must be true to the Christian vision; Moslems must be true to the Moslem vision; Apaches must be true to the Apache vision: each vision, and the plethora of others in the world, is necessary to sustain the whole as set in motion and place by Creator.

It is both a comforting and awesome (in the sense of inspiring awe) responsibility that Creator has lain upon us. Maintaining the center that is within and the center we create by our own living must be the primary responsibility of each person, or so I am told.

1984: Cosmos and Center

"If our religion goes, we go as a people," Bernard had told me some years before. The more I learned of the religion, especially that focused around the girls' puberty ceremony of which Bernard was now Head Singer, the more I was forced to learn to pay attention to the sky, as well as to the rest of the natural universe. This summer I'd brought an astronomer to the field with me, as my own training in astronomy was minimal and I was not sure enough of our Western European scientific dogma to feel on comfortable ground with comparisons and contrasts with the Apachean version.

We sat around the dining table at Lorraine Evan's, Bernard's and my youngest sister. The star charts were spread on the table, but they turned out to be useful only to the children who delighted in exposing them to sunlight and then dashing into a closet to watch them phosphoresce in the darkness. Bernard sees the sky in its natural shape and colors and could not relate to the flat charts with their skewed perspective nor to the arbitrary lines we use to define constellations. Where we see Auriga, six-star constellation including the bright stars of Capella and Epsilon Auriga, Bernard talks of The-Three-Who-Went-Together (meaning three who died at the same time), a three-star constellation that includes Capella as well as Beta and Epsilon Auriga. Comparing knowledge systems is much more difficult than I had originally imagined.

Gene Ammarell, the education officer of the Fiske Planetarium at the University of Colorado, Boulder, was with me thanks to a grant from The American Council of Learned Societies. He and Bernard could talk man-to-man about men's knowledge and their contrasting views of what constituted proper science. Yet, always before beginning, Bernard said to me, "Are you ready? Is it (tape recorder) on? Do you have your notebook?" And, then, bragging on me as though I was not there, he would say to Gene, "She takes notes in the dark, too. Now what does she want to know?" Finally, I had provided him with a way in which he could directly teach me men's knowledge without violating his own cultural canons against instructing women in the knowledge of men. Why, I wonder, did it take me so many years to

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think to bring a man to the field with me?

In the beginning, Bernard related, there was only the Creator who in four days brought the universe into being. On the last day people were created, for we are the weakest link in the chain of being and are dependent upon all the rest of Creation for our own sustenance. The genesis is made visible to people through the natural workings of the universe and the four seasons, the circularity of the stars, the circles described by the motion of the universe around us, the stages of life through which we all should pass unless we die prematurely. It is all there for us to see, if only we will open our eyes and pay attention.

1986: Generating the Center

Again an astronomer came with me to Mescalero; this time it was Ray A. Williamson of the Office of Technology Assessment in Washington, D.C. We had a specific protocol and particular things to check from my previous work. Bernard was very ill and, as it turned out, was unable to finish singing the ceremony. We were only able to work together a couple of nights. But, perhaps, there were more important things to learn than specific star and constellation names and how they are used to time the ceremonial and life itself.

Each girl having a puberty ceremony has her own Singer, in the ideal at least. The Mescalero number fewer than 3,000 now and there are not always enough Singers to go around; oftentimes, two girls, usually cousins or sisters, will share a Singer. All Singers follow the Head Singer, who is still Bernard Second. Even if a particular Singer was taught, or learned, a different version of a particular song or ritual sequence, he will follow the lead of the Head Singer during ceremonial time. When the Head Singer does not perform, or cannot do so, there is movement toward entropy and a threat of chaos.

Lorraine and I, and other women in the extended family, took turns caring for Bernard who insisted upon staying in the tipi on the ceremonial mesa rather than going to a hospital where he belonged. He had started the ceremonial, had sung for three of the four nights, but could not sing on the fourth, and most important, night when Singers and girls stay up all night performing various rituals. The center of the year's ceremonial was missing and the recreation of the universe that the Singers recapitulate during the four nights' singing was going to be missing its final time, the time when people assume responsibility for maintaining their center.

As the last night moved toward 10 p.m. and still Bernard did not appear, three of the other Singers came to me. "I'm an Anglo, and outsider, a woman; don't ask me anything," my insides were screaming. But the Singers approached me as a woman of Bernard's family, since I was obviously barring the entrance to the tipi where Bernard lay. Could he sing? No. Would he sing? Perhaps in the morning, if he can rest.

I wanted to run and hide so they would have to ask real family members, not a fictitious one like me, what to do. But it was my turn to stay with Bernard. Then came the realization that perhaps this, too, was a lesson for me if only I'd pay attention, as Bernard had so often chided me to do.

The center is where the person assumes responsibility for the on-goingness of whatever may be in progress. It is not necessarily entrusted to the most able, the most knowledgeable, the most wise, the most deserving. It may well be given to the least among us. As Bernard had told me, in each generation there is one who carries the weight of the world; no one ever knows who it is so it is wise to help all to the extent of our own ability for we never know if it is the fool, the crazy, the leader, or the everyday person who has been chosen in that generation. Only the Creator knows who the person is. As long as each of us performs our assigned task, no matter how trivial it may seem, we are contributing to the centeredness of the universe. The balance begins, and ends, with each of us.

1987: Centering

Strange that I, born in New York City and reared in a thoroughly Anglo way, should learn a tenet of my own Quaker faith in the mountains of New Mexico under a brilliant night sky marred only by smoke from camp and cooking fires while sitting in the dark in front of a tipi worrying about an Indian man ill inside. But perhaps not so strange after all: if I am to believe what I have been taught and have learned through observation during the years I have spent at Mescalero, then I must allow that the balance and harmony each of us desires must begin in our own beings. I am the center, and so are you. Each Mescalero Apache who is properly attentive contributes to the essential and inherent balance and harmony of the universe. Each Anglo who is properly attentive has the same potential. Quaker and Mescalero Apache – each begins the universal connection through a centering of one's own self. Some choose to begin by meditation; others choose to begin by drawing ndá'i bijuuł. It really is the same thing, as Bernard averred, and, as he insisted, I would learn as soon as I could properly pay attention.

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Robert Shashinda, Cover Sculpture Artist
Photo courtesy of the American Indian Contemporary Art Gallery

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learned from the mystics of our own tradition and/or from other spiritual teachers? Have we learned centering within our own bodies? Do we teach centering to our children?

I once had a student who was my counselee at John Woolman School who confessed to me that she felt so scattered that she could not concentrate on anything. She asked my advice. My instruction was brief: "Go out into the woods by yourself and sit quietly. Meditate. And learn to throw clay on the potter's wheel so your entire body will experience centering as you center the clay. You will find that your concentration will improve."

How did I know this? Through my own experience; through the instructions of my teachers, some of whom I had met only in books, like M.C. Richards who wrote *Centering*. Learning through the body – stilling it, listening in silence, becoming aware of everything pulsing about us and the Spirit within us – or using the body to create – art, movement, dance, music, poetry – we become centered, energized, happy.

Robert Shashinda, Mescalero Apache artist, whose "Apache Mountain Spirit" appears on our cover, has this to say about his artistic objectives:

"The modern Native American is caught up in the conflicting values of his (or her) tribal identity and that of Mainstream America. Some deny their tribal values, some reject mainstream life and return to their tribal home and the Old Ways, and some find a working harmony and a sense of balance with both life ways. It is my hope that through my art, I can give a glimpse of the spirit inside contemporary Native Americans as they make their way in today."

Finding a working harmony and a sense of balance with life's ways is an objective for the teachable everywhere.

Shirley Ruth

Young Friends Daybook

Dear Young Friends of PYM:

I send you loving greetings from Nenntmannsdorf in East Germany in the name of young Friends here.

I was glad to be able to have Kirsten and Ellen Crutcher of Pacific Yearly Meeting here as guests. Our Young Friends Center that we are building is growing. From July 24 to 31, 1987 was a Music/Theatre Camp here and from August 1 to 10, 1987 was a summer seminar with Eva Pinthus (from England) with the themes: Quaker History, Quaker Beliefs, Group Training.

I remember with much happiness your yearly gathering of 1985 when I was able to be with you. I can earn a lot of money to build the youth center by using the Casio Synthesizer, your gift.

Again, thank you very, very much. In spite of the great distance and the borders between you and me I feel a strong tie with you.

Yours,

Christian Pinkert, Nenntmannsdorf, East Germany

Western Young Friends Gathering at Myrtle Point, Or. New Year Holiday

by Martha Reynolds and Ross McKinney, Grass Valley Meeting

(excerpted from G.V. Mtg Newsletter March 1988)

In spite of being ill, Martha recalled enjoying the contageous enthusiasm of YF's who had gone to USSR and the family talent night. Ross filled in some history of the gathering, having attended for its full 10 years when it was started by teens at PYM. A new influx of high school age people is reviving it as a space where youth can grow and be nurtured. He remarked on the playing of New Games, Worship Sharing, space to do personal work in Support Groups and Workshops. A German friend spoke on witnessing through conflict-resolution methods, by exposing enemy-making propaganda, and through creative forms of civil disobedience. Highpoints for Ross were storytelling after midnight. (Now he professionally performs as a storyteller in schools.)

"This feels like peace and quietness to me." Drawing by Felicity Hatcher, age 11 (1978) Mt. View Meeting (CO), from notepaper made of drawings by First Day School children.

BIBLES FOR MIDDLE FIRST-DAY SCHOOL

from Mountain View Friends Meeting Newsletter, February 1988

On Sunday, January 10th, the children in the middle school First Day School class (6th - 8th grades) received Bibles from the Meeting. The Children in the Life of the Meeting Committee initiated this idea as a means of recognizing these children's participation in the Meeting and their moving into young adulthood. The *Good News Bible* was selected and will be used in a unit of Bible study in the coming weeks. The Young Friends receiving them were : Ricky Daniel, Alice Haynes, John Haynes, Matthew Koval, Keil Mueller, Jennifer Post, Shane Stanke, Jamie Weathers, Julie Donaldson, and Therone.

Forum

The Editor does not necessarily agree with the opinions expressed by correspondents in this Forum.

Marriage for Gay Friends

by Lindsay Rahmun, Corvallis Friends Meeting

As we season the concern about marriage for gay Friends, I am helped by remembering our heritage as Friends. We have a strong tradition of letting our vision of equality and justice guide us, rather than accepting the ways of the world. Many of the innovations begun by Friends to make the world a more loving place have involved changing both words and institutions to make that vision real.

The pioneering actions that come to my mind are these: changing the language so that all people were addressed as equals with the word "thou;" accepting women as equal to men and recording them as ministers; accepting Africans as equal to Europeans, and defying the laws supporting slavery; and, more recently, accepting the ability of all Friends to minister, even in the legally binding situation of a wedding. (In this last action they broke with all other denominations. They even, for a period of time, lost the acknowledgement of the civil authorities that such marriages are "real.")

None of these changes were taken lightly. Surely Friends feared, in each case, that they might be acting rashly to defy tradition and even law to make their witness. Surely they had a hard time imagining how things could be different from the way they'd always been. The unfamiliar seems abnormal and the abnormal can seem morally wrong. New roles are awkward, too, and probably people were embarassed and unskilled as they tried relating to one another as equals, rather than as "superiors" or "subordinates." Finally, we should not forget the punishment that would surely come from non-Friends: laughter, scorn, removal of privileges, jail.

These problems were equal to, or greater than, those we face today. Yet it seems that earlier Friends faced the fears and obstacles but refused to be guided by them. Instead, they showed the courage we admire today, by trusting their vision of the Kingdom for guidance. If God makes us equal, then we will relate to each other as equals, in spite of our fears and the problems we may find. If God makes us equal, then we will accept women and servants and slaves as equal to their husbands and masters, in spite of Biblical references telling us this is wrong. If God makes us equal, then we will take the first steps, uncertain as they may be, with faith that more Light will be given as we try.

Today we are given the opportunity to thresh a concern similar to those above. Is denying marriage to gay Friends any less important a concern? I think not. Marriage confers respect upon the partners, recognition upon their loyalty and commitment, and secular privileges that could be called civil rights. When my husband works, I receive the benefits: tax breaks, health insurance, due share in the pension. This is society's way of acknowledging the fact that we really are related, a family sharing our lives. Shall we deny all of this to gay Friends? Why?

Elton Trueblood in *The People Called Quakers* says, "Once no Quaker, not even George Fox, saw slavery as a deep and terrible sin .... A hundred years later, at the death of John Woolman, the moral vision had altered so radically that slavery was seen as a sin .... Many other changes have come, and many more ought to come. When new proposals are made, each can be examined in the light of its own merits .... The fact that a proposal is novel will never be an adequate reason for rejection .... A changeless Quakerism would be a contradiction in terms. The only way to be loyal to the heritage of the pioneers is to pioneer, rather than to go on standing where the pioneers once stood."

We could bring gay Friends into equal status with straight Friends in one of two ways. We could hold only "Ceremonies of Commitment," thus giving up the secular privileges that

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come with legally recognized marriages. Alternatively, we could offer *all* Friends the sacrament of marriage. It does an injustice to Friends' vision for us to continue this inequality. Can we also be valiant?

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"There is One with whom we can find harmony in unity without unison ..."

Dear Shirley Ruth,

The latest issue of the Bulletin arrived today. Thank you for your careful job of setting forth ideas that are hard for us to listen to. You said once that you put your trust in Truth and Love. Besides, you said growth and peace can only come after struggle.

I also put my trust in Truth. Furthermore I believe, unlike some Friends these days, that there is such a thing, a foundation of Being which exists independent of our belief, prejudice, personal experience or suffering, or even partially illuminating revelation. I believe besides in the metaphysical, in the Eternal One, Creator, All–knowing, All–powerful, and that we know very little about it except that its major attribute is Love. It is only when we are able to act in love that we can be in touch with the inspiration of that of God within each of us.

As a student of linguistics and communication, I am aware of the difficulties of finding unanimity and understanding with the rough tools we have. But I remember that Confucius advised, "The true Sage is the one who will give back to words their true meanings." What are the true meanings of words like God, love, truth, be, marriage, joy? Is there an objective reality absent the connotations of bias, pain, preference, ambition and ignorance? One of the frequent phrases over the last two years of ardent argument in University Meeting has been, "Words are slippery things." I think one of the strengths of the Quaker way has been to avoid defining. It has especially avoided defining mystical experiences, which transcend words' ability to transmit their reality. To define originally meant to set limits, to put an end to. Theologically, we may argue that it is impossible to define God since The Divine is beyond the limits of our mental conception. Perhaps, as the wag said, "If God did not exist, we should have to invent Him." Personally, I feel it more useful to wonder if humans did not now exist, would God invent us? If marriage did not already exist, would we invent it?

Linguists acknowledge that words mean what the society who use them mean by them. They are not something preformed and found on Mt. Sinai with the stone tablets. They are different ways of looking at reality, of dividing up the unity of the universe into manageable morsels, of distinguishing, comparing or unifying ideas. As culture and people's ideas change, so words and their definitions change.

Communication science teaches us to remember that the map is not the territory, the menu is not the meal, nor is the Bible the same as the Holy Spirit which led people to write about their religious experience. Whether you call it Allah, Tao, Yahweh Adonai, Brahman Atman, Christ, or Great Spirit, it defies limitation and calls for paradox: Mother/Father, Heavenly King/Inward Teacher, known only in solitude/visible only in relationship, Omnipotent who only works by tender love, Grace and Providence which also convicts us of our lack of grace, trust and thankfulness. Even negative words like ahimsã (I shall not harm) are more useful when dealing with concepts like these that involve the Divine. So marriage is not what we name it, but what we experience in the union of two families through two persons: a covenant made with God. But as George Fox warned us, we do not marry, only God does that. We can take this special relationship under our care. Yet what we call it then is the question.

It is a theological question. Since words have power to heal or to harm our emotions, to guide our thinking and define our reality, or at

least our understanding thereof, to lead us to God or separate us from God, we need to give back to words their true meanings. How can we take care of a relationship if we do not agree what to call it? I ask because what you call it will guide your care of it. How can you care equally for all your brothers and sisters, if some of them are always distinguished as your gay brothers and lesbian sisters? The Supreme Court found us incapable of "separate but equal" education of children divided by race. Has the Supreme Being found us incapable of separate but equal treatment of loving relations distinguished by sex?

The theological question the Religious Society of Friends must face is whether we believe that God's love is powerful enough to marry any two persons. Can our Society trust individuals' experience and the manifestation of their beliefs through their lives and affirm that "Where Love is, there is God and Christ also"? Can we accept the leadings of the Holy Spirit as we discover truth is greater than any of our individual imaginings?

But it is more than that. When a Friend says that marriage for heterosexual commitments must be distinguished from homosexual commitment, ignorance is apparent. But if that Friend continues insisting, (after education has been offered, and the experience of Friends related) that the two cannot be likened or treated equally, I find homophobia apparent. Homophobia means the irrational fear of (usually sexual) relationship with those of one's sex or of those who have such relationships. The fear, in my experience, is irrational. All the discourse and dialog and attempts to provide education, communication and conflict resolution are only so much hot air unless there is a willingness on all sides to overcome subconscious fear. So far, we have been debating words; we need now to look at our fears of each other. The question is not words but the effect on lives.

Do we fear our enemies more than we love the Truth? Do we fear our Friends more than we respect their seeking? Are we afraid that if the use of the word marriage changes, we may have to change our estimation of our own personal relationships? What is the fear that raises such powerful emotions when a group of Friends seen as different respond by saying, "We're the same"? This fear has kept most of those who would define and limit marriage to heterosexuals from finding out what homosexual persons do experience. It seems to have prevented their querying their own assumptions. And I can attest that it has led to saying hurtful things — often from ignorance or fear, not intending to harm, but cutting nonetheless. Violence is born of fear, and as the Apostle John said, "Where there is fear, there is no love." Friends have done violence to Friends over this issue.

Marvin Gregory's letter accuses gay and lesbian Friends of whining and asking for pity. It suggests that if someone has an experience, that person is immediately disqualified from reporting or acting on it; only those who are disinterested can speak on an issue. That kind of thinking is turning our Society into an Atheist Debating Club because only those who have no experience of God will be qualified to speak. It is precisely because of the suffering that others' judgments and judgmentalness have brought into gay and lesbian lives that they bring a new share of Truth to the Society of Friends. God does not call us to be judgmental, but to love. To treat the other as we wish we would be treated. To give to the other not just what is asked but the shirt off our back, walking the extra mile. [Gandhi remarked: "We are presented with the case of a man mounted on another's back, saying he is willing to do anything to alleviate the other's burden — except get down off his back."]

Other Friends have accused homosexual Friends of forming a political action group within the Society, of being an alien force, an invasion trying to take over the feeble and defenseless Religious Society of Friends. This recent and shocking development has led me to reconsider that it took John Woolman more than five or seven years to convince Friends to free their slaves. [A point for no pride I should add, no

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(There is One: con't from page 131)
matter how effectively Quakers later put into action the conviction. It seems that nothing but one presentation of the loving Truth should have convinced those living lives guided by God's Spirit that they should act.] Yet some Friends think that we have already spent too much time — on an issue which affects the lives and happiness of many individuals and determines whether or not our Religious Society remains open to the Light? Have their children been denied homes with them because of their sexual practices? Have they been refused entry to their spouses' hospital rooms because their father-in-law did not recognize their relationships? Such monumental cold shoulders should be reason for us to examine this issue till doomsday!

So my concern regarding Woolman is that he might have been a more effective minister to the Society had he been black or even a slave. His fervor might have been more solidly grounded in experience. Two hundred twelve years after Philadelphia Yearly Meeting minuted the end of slaveholding, the number of blacks in our denomination is pitiably small. In fact, if Asian Americans and African Americans have had an experience of welcome similar to that given homosexual Americans, the reason few remain becomes obvious: the problem is not that the culture from which they came was alien to Quakers, but that Quakers alienated them once they came asking Friends to live up to their words. Black friends I have invited to Meeting report that even when they love the form of worship and the Presence in the group, afterward they find something which makes it uncomfortable for them to return.

Something similar is perhaps happening to sexual minorities among us. As I recall, homosexual Friends are first Friends, who happen to be oriented sexually to persons of the same gender. All of them that I know believed they were led by a Spirit of love to worship after this fashion with this community. We received a welcome, unlike the intolerance other religious communities gave us. We saw part of the Truth and began to witness Friends Testimonies in our lives. We read *Faith and Practice* which says that homosexuals are equal and their love can receive community blessing also. It even encouraged Friends to undertake such support because it would strengthen them to look at these issues! But look what is said now!

A Friend says he is ashamed that University Meeting has a reputation, with some people he knows at least, as a gay and lesbian Meeting. Were early Friends embarrassed that others slandered them for allowing women to speak? Was Woolman afraid to be called a slave lover; were those who ran the Underground Railway ashamed of being "nigger-lovers"? And have we cared that fascists called us "Jew-lovers" in 1939, in 1943 "Jap-lovers," and later, as our FBI files demonstrate, "communists"? We should be proud to be like Jesus who was reviled as the friend of sinners and publicans and tax collectors, the pariahs of his time. "What happiness will be yours when people blame you and ill–treat you and say all kinds of slanderous things against you for my sake! Be glad — for your spiritual reward is magnificent."

When Friends who are not homosexual demand that lesbians and gays cease raising this question and sit down, they are sending them to the back of the bus. They likewise deprecate and discount the large numbers of non–gay Friends who already understand and respect our concern. In fact, it is principally "straight" Quakers who have repeatedly raised this question. When they say we are doing this for "merely" political motives, they judge our spiritual lives and deny that we have held our concerns in the Light. How do they know? And who are they to judge? And if they like to quote the Bible, ought they not to remember the verse about denial of the Holy Ghost being the unforgivable blasphemy?

Let us return to a *spiritual* religion of love for each other. Let us let God marry, not human church or state. Let us trust God to uphold us if we trust in Grace. Let us throw down the idol–worship of fear, petitioning,

defining, limiting. To say that the Society of Friends is defenseless is to say that God has no power in our lives, that we must put our trust in outward weapons of this world. (We might as well start stockpiling our own nukes!)

I won't deny that gay and lesbian Friends have been frightened and have said and done hurtful things from fear. Many times, however, I have been with them, in some of the deepest, most precious, gathered worship I have ever experienced, and seen how the Spirit has led gay Friends to mercy, concern for hearing the needs and fears of others, tenderness even to those who have been most harsh. I do not think gay and lesbian Friends are saints, but our experience of oppression may make it easier for us to avoid oppressing others. I feared that publication of incendiary articles like some we have seen recently would frighten away homosexuals who were already battered by the world, by AIDS, by lack of acceptance in other parts of their lives. Such comments do not seem to me seasoned by the corporate Light.

Seeing this latest issue, I must agree that it is well done. You have framed what people have to say and edited skillfully for length without changing meaning. You have not protected us from our rough edges, but have asked us to be mature and deal with their existence. They will not just go away. Just as I promised I would not go away; I'm in this for the long haul asking Friends to treat me as a whole. Isn't that what the Testimony on simplicity and integrity means? I am a whole person whose light on matters, whether directly affecting me or not, is valid and deserves to be valued by my Society. Already I have been accepted enough, have found enough joy of God's presence in worship, have shared enough not to be scared away even by rough edges.

Some gays and lesbians may be scared away from the Society because of this controversy; I will be sorry that we could not welcome them in a world where they get so little welcome. Some Friends may leave because the conflict is not to be resolved to their liking; we will miss their Light. But I agree with you that growth and peace come only through struggle. If it were not for the stormy nights, the sunny days would go unnoticed. I hope you are right, Shirley Ruth, that the conflict in my Meeting will help others. I am so close to the forest, all I see some days, God help me, is the grubs crawling on the bark. I'm glad that our concerns about process will help the clerking workshop, where one of our Members will be trying to find support to seek where we go next. I'm thankful for your historical context. It is useful and painful to think we are a microcosm; I say the Religious Society should not be a microcosm of society at large, but should be raising a beacon to show how we all, disparate as God created us, can live in peace under God's guidance.

Yes: we can only continue to pray and work toward unity. There is One with whom we can find harmony in unity without unison; we need not return to a grey monotone. But first, I would ask for a long moment of silence. Let us all stop where we are and turn to the one closest and look at him or her with eyes that see only that of God within. Let us love that person, warts and all, as we wish we could love ourselves. This last may be the hardest struggle. "The unity of Christians never did nor ever will or can stand in uniformity of thought and opinion, but in Christian love only." (Thomas Story, 1737)

I am your loving Friend for God's Peace,
D. Pablo Stanfield, University Meeting

Vital Statistics

Deaths

- **Medora Steedman Bass**, Santa Barbara Meeting, died December 5, 1987.
- **Gertrude Barbara Laitin**, Logan Meeting, died January 30, 1988.
- **Charles Eubanks**, Orange County Meeting, died March 10, 1988 in Long Beach at his home.

Announcements

El Centro de Paz Laid Down

by Mary V. Wegrzyn - Hoppis

The annual meeting of El Centro de Paz was held on December 28, 1987 at Casa Heberto Sein, Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico. It was decided on this date that El Centro de Paz be laid down as a legal corporation in the U.S.A. (State of New Mexico) within the year of 1988. It was emphasized that the spirit and networking of El Centro de Paz will continue under the loving care of Asociacion Sonorense de los Amigos A.C. (ASA). ASA has been coordinating Mexican service projects and Casa Heberto Sein in Hermosillo for many years.

According to El Centro de Paz Articles of Incorporation "all liabilities and obligations of the corporation shall be paid, satisfied or discharged or provision shall be made therefore" in the event of dissolution. In accordance with this provision all funds currently en route to El Centro de Paz will be paid to ASA, to be used for the Mesa del Campanero project or Casa Sein.

Please send future donations to Asociacion Sonorense de los Amigos by mailing contributions to Claremont Meeting, 727 Harrison Avenue, Claremont, CA 91711. Mark your check for Asociacion Sonorense de los Amigos, A.C.

Pendle Hill Staff Opening: Head Resident

The position of Head Resident at Pendle Hill is available August 1, 1988.

Applications will be accepted until **April 15, 1988**, or until the position is filled. For more information write to: Bernice Nichols, Clerk, Head Resident Search Committee, Pendle Hill, Wallingford, PA 19086.

Witness for Peace Long Term Team Search

Long Term Team members serve one year terms in Nicaragua. They host WFP short term delegations, document contra atrocities, and serve as a permanent presence in all areas of Nicaragua. All team members must be 21 years old, US citizens and speak Spanish fluently or be willing to study the language for 4 - 6 months.

Women and minorities are encouraged to apply. Send a SASE to Long Term Coordinator, %WFP, P.O. Box 567, Durham, NC 27702.

Witness for Peace Two-Year Service Search

Witness for Peace is currently seeking individuals for a two-year extended term of service on the Northeast coast of Nicaragua, to be based in Puerto Cabezas. Candidates of Native, African, or Hispanic American background are encouraged to apply. Some theological training or at least a familiarity with Reformed/Methodist/Anglican or Moravian traditions is necessary. All team members must be at least 21 years old and have US citizenship, good Spanish skills, and cross-cultural experiences.

Send SASE to WFP, P.O. Box 567, Durham, NC 27702

Urgent Appeal: Friends Committee on War Tax Returns

by Anne Friend, IMYM, PYM and NPYM Representative to FCWTC

The *Handbook on Military Taxes and Conscience* will be published in May 1988 if enough money to pay the printer ($13,000 in addition to what is presently pledged) can be raised by mid-April. It will contain all the material in the published booklets, four additional chapters, a study guide and an index. The additional chapters will cover personal experiences (several from our meetings), legislative history (written by David Bassett and revised and edited for the book by Anne Friend), statements of other religious groups and a description of current international activity on the issue (an area where there has been major development in the last two years).

The anticipated price of $12.00 each with a special pre-publication price of $9.00 is expected to cover the cost and distribution of the first printing. Order forms will be sent to all Monthly Meetings the first week in May.

Special Notice to Monthly Meetings

There is a real need for one-time contributions designated for publication costs of the *HMTC*. These funds will have to come from individuals and Monthly Meetings because we hope the book will be for sale at Yearly Meetings and the committee laid down. Please consider making a contribution and encourage your members and attenders to help finish this project.

Please send earmarked contributions to FCWTC, P.O. Box 73441, Washinton, DC 20009.

ooo 1988 Workcamps John Woolman School - Ninth Year! ooo

Camp 1: Sunday supper, June 26 through Sunday breakfast, July 3. Minimum age 8. No staff for children.

Camp 2: Sunday supper, July 3 through Sunday breakfast, July 10. Minimum age 4. Child care person plus a workcamper will be available during working hours.

The number of young people will be determined by age balance. **All under 18** must be with an adult.

Costs per week: 15 and older, $40. 11 -14, $35. 10 and under, $25.

Work is from 7:30 to 3:00 P.M.

Camping is tenting or sleeping under the stars.

Eating is on the deck of the nearby Quaker Meeting House. Skilled volunteers cook meals.

Recreation includes swimming, canoeing and whatever else campers wish. **No pets!**

No skills are necessary. To advise workcampers about tools they will need to bring, **state in your application any special skills or areas of expertise.**

To apply send names, ages of minors, sexes, addresses, skills, phones and $10 per adult (payable to John Woolman School) to: Jorgensens, 7899 St. Helena Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95404. Phone (707) 538 - 1502. **The only deadline is a full camp - that is - 30 persons.**

ooo Calendar Additions ooo

April 22 - 23 Friendly Women's Retreat, Camp Stoney near Sante Fe. Contact Ann Dudley Edwards at (505) 265 - 3022.

April 27 - May 1 "Poverty & Hunger in America, Youth Seminar" (High school juniors, seniors and college age Friends), Wm. Penn House, 515 E Capitol St SE, Washington DC 20003, (202) 543-5560. $100 total fees plus transportation.

June 20 - 22 Quaker Theological Conference "The Light of Christ and Quaker Universalism," Quaker Hill Conference Center. Contact (317) 962-5741 or (317) 962-8725.

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FWCC Announces

Quaker Star Rose

to Commemorate Tercentenary of George Fox's Death in 1691

A new variety of rose, called "Quaker Star" is in the process of being selected in the trial grounds of Patrick Dickson, world famous rose hybridist. Eight varieties are presently on trial in Oregon and at the Royal National Rose Society Trial Grounds in St. Albans, England. These will be on sale in time for planting in 1991, as a fitting way to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the death of George Fox, founder of the Religious Society of Friends.

This is a unique opportunity, as it is unlikely that this will be a regularly available "stock" rose, and so the number of bushes produced will only be the number reserved. It is too early to determine color, type and exact price; but Friends will need to indicate their interest now. Old Jordans Premises committee has already requested 50 bushes. For your own garden, your meetinghouse, Friends center, school or retirement home, send reservations to the address below by April 30, 1988. Actual orders may be placed later at local nurseries.

To reserve "Quaker Star" rose bushes, please write to: "Quaker Star," %Allen Pearson, 8 Corcreevy Road, Richhill, Armagh, BT61 9JR, Northern Ireland.